Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

Transforming lives

News **Statement**
www.dshs.wa.gov

May 23, 2014   **NO. 014-12**

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DSHS responds to media reports regarding performance audit of public benefits

Olympia - The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) takes allegations of fraud very seriously. We welcome that the State Auditor's Office is taking an independent look at our operations in its performance audit of public benefits, including the use of electronic benefits cards.

<u>Information identified during the audit thus far has been given to DSHS for review. It is likely to change as the audit proceeds.</u> As part of the normal due process of an audit, the Auditor's Office has asked us to examine this preliminary information and to offer our conclusions, which we are doing. We want to ensure the final audit report is accurate, complete and tells the public what actions DSHS will take going into the future, as part of our mission of ensuring taxpayer dollars are safeguarded.

In order to prevent misuse and abuse, we continue to make improvements to our public benefits systems. We also look forward to any recommendations the Auditor's Office may make regarding further enhancements. The Auditor's Office has stated in plans to release the final report in August.

Last year, more than 1.5 million people received benefits including food, cash and other necessary services from DSHS. We work diligently to ensure only eligible individuals receive these benefits and that dollars are properly spent. We believe that even one instance of fraud is one too many.

As we do in many of our other programs, we rely on strong public partnerships to help us in our work. People who suspect EBT card fraud should contact our welfare fraud hotline at 1-800-562-6906.

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DSHS does not discriminate and provides equal access to its programs and services for all persons without regard to race, color, gender, religion, creed, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, age, veteran's status or the presence of any physical, sensory or mental disability.